

**ESTHER FOWLER**



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A BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF  
ESTHER FOWLER

A VALUED MINISTER  
IN THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



## MEMORIAL

A Testimony issued by New Garden Monthly Meeting of Friends, Ohio, held First Month 25, 1923, and approved by Ohio Yearly Meeting, concerning our late beloved friend, Esther Fowler, with some reference to her husband, John S. Fowler.

Our beloved friend, Esther Fowler, having been a member of this meeting for many years; we, as partakers of much of her labor in the Love of the Gospel, feel constrained to record some account of her life for the encouragement of others to labor for the same blessed attainment which we reverently trust was her experience, that "The work of righteousness is peace and the effect thereof quietness and assurance forever."

Though we loved her we do not desire to exalt the creature, but to magnify that Power which made her what she was—even that Power which did show forth the fruits of her dedicated life.

She was careful to be diligent in the service of her Divine Master, not easily turned aside, but in child-like faith and trust seemed to

## ESTHER FOWLER

exemplify the words of our Saviour, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." We believe it was her meat and drink to do His holy will.

She was born the 27th of Sixth Month, 1845, daughter of Isaac and Sarah Huestis, valuable members of Chesterfield Monthly Meeting, Ohio.

She was frail in health, and ever felt the limitations of her strength, and often acknowledged the superintending care of her Heavenly Father in her arduous labors of love at home and abroad.

In early years she manifested a desire for an increase in those things which are enduring, being concerned to bear the cross in regard to our testimonies, and she was ever obedient to her keen sense of Divine requireing in these particulars. The following entry in her diary shows her care in these respects. "May I more endeavor to profit by the many privileges by which I am surrounded and know an increasing desire that the day's work may keep pace with the day." Sixth Month 27th, 1872, she writes, "My twenty-seventh birthday, should time be lengthened out until another year has run its course, would that I might know an increase in best wisdom."

She was often prostrated on a bed of sickness for weeks at a time, and many were her trials of faith, but through it all her confidence in that almighty Arm of power, which was as a strong-

## ESTHER FOWLER

hold in the day of trouble seemed to be the clothing of her spirit.

In the Eleventh Month, 1876, she first appeared publicly in the line of the ministry. Five years afterwards her gift was acknowledged by her meeting. At this time she writes in her diary, "Would that I might so dwell under the purifying, sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit that I may thereby be enabled to walk worthy of that vocation whereto I trust He has called me after long years of striving against the intimation of duty thus to openly acknowledge Him before men, and I trust a feeling of thankfulness may be mine that in the riches of His love and mercy, He did not see meet to leave me to make my own choice but led me in that way which enabled me in measure to realize that there was nothing in this life comparable to the incomes of His love and peace shed abroad in the heart with which He from season to season rewards His obedient children."

Sixth Month 21st, 1882. "Would that I might center in Him who is the light, the life, and the strength of His poor unworthy children that I may be enabled to walk acceptably before Him. Thou knowest, dearest Father, thy poor child just as she is. Oh then be pleased to enable her to cleave close unto Thee that thus I may know Thy saving strength, and be favored still to acknowledge 'Hitherto Thou has helped me.' "

On Sixth Month 22nd, 1882, she was married

## ESTHER FOWLER

to John S. Fowler, a member of Plymouth Monthly Meeting, Ohio.

Esther Fowler found in her husband one who, though very frail in health, could sympathize with her in the service to which we believe she was called. They often traveled together on missions of Gospel Love when, from an outward point of view, they appeared physically unable.

John S. Fowler was early visited with Divine impressions and desires were begotten that he might turn to and follow that inward Guide that would lead away from the hurtful things of life. At one time he writes, "I was arrested with a voice saying, 'If thou wilt forsake these vanities and be faithful to Me thou shalt both save thyself and others.' A short time after this when my head was laid on my pillow, my mind became filled with feelings of great solemnity, and I was led to take a view of the transitory enjoyments of the things I so much delighted in, and also their failure to give true peace of mind, and take away the fear of death." He alluded again and again to having gone counter to the light of Christ as manifested to him, and referred to a visit at his father's by a beloved friend and his wife, who requested a religious opportunity for the family, "His main concern seemed for me, addressing me in tender persuasive language, which tendered my heart, but I was still unwilling to submit. I suffered much for my disobedience, but infinite mercy in tender



## ESTHER FOWLER

compassion and long suffering kindness afforded one more visitation, and I have ever believed it was the last one that would be offered me." We believe John S. Fowler was concerned to be faithful to his Lord and Master, and endeavored to do that which he felt required. In later life he records, "Now in the 74th year of my age I will endeavor to acknowledge the compassionate love and long suffering of a merciful Redeemer to me to whom He was pleased to afford the day of visitation in early life."

They resided within the limits of Plymouth Monthly Meeting, Ohio, until the year 1892, when, under a sense of apprehended duty, they removed to West Chester, Pennsylvania, and were members of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting for some time. During their stay there Esther Fowler obtained a minute for religious service in the northeast part of Africa, preparations having been made for the journey, and with proper credentials she and her husband left home, as alluded to in their diary, "Left our home in West Chester in company with our dear friends J. W. and M. A. C. S., who accompanied us as far as New York on our journey to the northeast of Africa. After boarding the steam ship Umbria at New York, the vessel slowly backed from the dock, and when arriving at the open platform at the end of the pier an affecting sight of several hundred people, among whom our friends were readily recognizable, standing

## ESTHER FOWLER

to wave a final farewell, a deep and solemnly sad-denying feeling came over us with the thoughtful query if this might not be to some a last farewell. The scene was delightful, as the morning was bright, and as the boundless expanse opened before us a feeling of the responsible mission we have felt called to, solemnly impressed our minds, so much so that conversation seemed insignificant in comparison."

In speaking of this exercising journey to a relative in after years, she remarked the first opening to this concern was when prostrated on a bed of sickness some years before, "being much discouraged about my recovery, the language, 'thou shalt yet cross the Nile,' much impressed me." In the carrying out of this concern they were exercised that they might be preserved from stepping aside from a faithful observance of our precious principles and testimonies. Again, in referring to their visit, "When about to leave that ancient land, Egypt, our feelings were that it was a day of precious Divine visitation to the inhabitants thereof."

After sailing from there, Esther Fowler writes, "When the thought occurred to my dear husband that we were leaving Egypt forever, the situation of the children and the blind (of the latter of whom it was said there were from 5,000 to 8,000 in the city of Cairo alone), their pitiful and distressing condition and urgent appeal for help came pressingly before him.

## ESTHER FOWLER

Later he was instrumental in raising funds for their care and relief.

One, not a member of our Religious Society, in a letter written since their decease, alluding to their visit in Egypt, their love and concern for the needy, suffering ones, and their desire to serve the Master, remarked, "They were indeed worthy characters, and what useful, upright, Christian lives they led, and what fine ideals of the Master and His service. Such lives are a blessing and a benediction to the world."

In the year 1897, feeling the time had come to leave their home in West Chester, Pennsylvania, they removed within the limits of New-garden Monthly Meeting, Ohio. Esther Fowler was frequently called to visit in Gospel Love that Yearly Meeting of which they were members for several years, and appreciated the favors and blessings received while there. She often alluded with thankfulness to the kindness and helpfulness of Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, particularly in assisting them in making the journey to Egypt, feeling that without such aid the concern could not have been carried out. At one time she remarked, when recounting some of the exercises through which she had passed, together with the many mercies and favors of which she had been the recipient, she related the following, "I felt that it was required of me to attend a neighboring

## ESTHER FOWLER

meeting which necessitated our going by public conveyance. Being at that time in very limited circumstances, I gave way to discouragement, feeling we could not afford the expense, acquainting my husband with the concern and at the same time saying, 'If we have to be going about in this way I wish some one would feel like handing us our car fare.' He encouraged me to faithfulness, and we were soon on our way but had not proceeded far when an individual, who at that time was a stranger to us, came forward in the car, and handing us some money, said, 'If any money would be acceptable in helping to pay car fare, you will be welcome to it.' Instantly this language passed through my mind, 'Oh! why could thou not trust Me; have I not been ever mindful of thy needs?' I felt so humbled by this occurrence I thought I would never be so lacking in faith again."

On Tenth Month 19th, 1908, having obtained a minute for religious labor in Japan, she with her husband as companion left their home for service in that land, sailing from San Francisco the 27th of Tenth Month, and after a comfortable voyage landed at Yokohama. After a stay of about a month they again took passage on the same steamer for the return trip, and landed at San Francisco on First Month 1st, 1909. Although there was not much recorded in regard to this visit, yet letters from Japanese girls and their teachers, as well as information obtained

## ESTHER FOWLER

in other ways, showed the comfort and satisfaction this visit was to people in that far-away land.

There is not sufficient space in this Memorial to speak of the many journeys she made in the service of her Master, and being ever watchful to the pointings of duty she was led to speak remarkably to those she met, sometimes having no outward knowledge of the individual. At one time she addressed an elderly man who was apparently in good health, saying, "Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live." Her message was kindly received, and seemed to make a deep impression on him, and though apparently unconcerned he was enabled to experience a change of heart and gave evidence of a preparation for the great change, and he passed away soon afterwards, showing how timely was her concern and her faithfulness in attending to apprehended duty.

On the 11th of Twelfth Month, 1910, her beloved husband was removed by death, and she often alluded to the loneliness she felt, and missed his sympathy and help in her various exercises; but she was desirous to be diligent to labor in the Lord's vineyard, having a minute for religious service within the limits of her own Quarterly Meeting at the time of her death. Her reliance upon her Heavenly Father, her humble dependence upon Him, is shown by the following entry in her diary, "Heavenly Father, it is a

## ESTHER FOWLER

life of many struggles, many conflicts, when the feeling came there is one great joy in it, they all bring me to know Thee better," and again, in the last account she kept, "Then lie down and rise up in the belief that thy Lord has finished it for thee in this sorrowing way, the Lord has risen indeed and will do great things for thee."

In her exercise to be found faithful and to live near her Heavenly Father day by day she was ever watchful to do His will. She attended her Quarterly Meeting on the 13th of Fifth Month, 1922, and her own particular meeting on the 14th, where she was engaged in a lively testimony, and on the 17th following she quietly passed away after a brief illness, and although the summons came suddenly, we reverently believe she was found with her lamp trimmed and her light burning, ready to enter in with the Bridegroom of Souls.

In the removal of this, our dear friend, she to whom we so long looked as a mother in Israel, we feel stripped, but do not mourn as those without hope, believing our loss is her eternal gain. Her funeral was an impressive occasion, and the feeling was with many who followed to its last resting place the remains of our dear departed Friend, "She being dead yet speaketh:" "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."





